

MT House Of Representatives  
Health & Human Services committee  
March 21, 2011

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

My name is Jon Krutar. I live in Ovando. I urge you to vote NO on SB 272. I speak to you today as a family member who has experienced mental illness, first hand. Earlier I wrote a letter to the editor, stating my reasons for opposing this bill; I sent this to each of you, so I shall be brief. I received numerous phone calls from fellow citizens and psychologists supporting my position. I received no phone calls disagreeing with my opinion.

FACT ONE-Mental illness is probably the most painful of all human maladies and the most difficult to treat. Suicide rates for mentally ill are extreme.

FACT TWO-Modern psychotropic medicines have been in use for only a relatively short period of time. They have extremely powerful, positive as well as serious, negative side effects.

FACT THREE- The proper prescribing and monitoring of psychotropic medication requires very specialized medical training; Montana and 48 other states restrict prescriptive authority for psychotropic medicine to ONLY Md.s, psychiatrists, and specialized nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Many general Md.s are reluctant to prescribe these drugs because they lack the proper knowledge and experience.

FACT FOUR-The human mind is the most sophisticated, complex, and least understood organ of our human body. The medical application of psychotropic medications poses serious life threatening potential as well as an increase in other illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes.

FACT FIVE-Our society witnesses the lack of proper psychiatric treatment in the form of overfilled jails, prisons, state hospitals, homeless, and horrific suffering.

FACT SIX-Montana has a severe lack of specialists serving our mentally ill.

FACT SEVEN-Psychologists' education in the sciences is minimal at best and frequently non-existent.

FACT EIGHT-The Oversight Committee called for by SB 272 is void of any mentally ill consumer or advocacy group.

OPINION ONE-The additional educational requirements for psychologists, required by SB 272, are inadequate. On-line education is a very weak form of education compared to that required for other medical professionals.

OPINION TWO-A fiscal note for any proposed legislation is only an educated guess. The sponsor of the bill challenges the estimated one time cost of \$6,148, stating that in LA and NM there has never been a single complaint about a prescribing psychologist. As a former college professor, I wish I could tell you I had the same record! The possible fiscal impact on the state general fund may be very large if improper prescribing of psychotropic medicine occurs. i.e. state hospital, jails, state prison, Medicaid, etc.

OPINION THREE- Each of you know family members or neighbors whose lives have been shattered by mental illness. Allowing psychologists to prescribe psychotropic medications is unlikely to reduce this suffering; improper prescribing may in fact increase the suffering and suicides.

RECOMMENDATION-SCRAP SB 272. CALL FOR AN INTERIM COMMITTEE TO RESEARCH THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHER STATES. EXAMINE OTHER METHODS OF EDUCATING AND ATTRACTING MORE SPECIALISTS IN MONTANA TO SERVE OUR MENTALLY ILL.

Thank you for your consideration.

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